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ABSTRACT

The theoretical differentiation of the village from the town is made on the basis of a complex of characteristics, which includes: the village was engaged mainly in agriculture; the culture, living conditions and organization of public services were far behind those of the town; the village did not exercise the functions of an administrative, cultural, financial and production center of other settlements; the village had up to 10,000 inhabitants; and the density of living was qualitatively lower compared to the town. However, today some changes have occurred in these characteristics and in their complex. Today the majority of the inhabitants are engaged in "industrial" labour (in factories, transport, public services) outside the village or in small enterprises in their own village. The agricultural labour has become a subtype of the industrial labour. In terms of culture, living conditions, and organization of public services, the village has become equal to, or has an apparent tendency to become equal to, the town. The quantity of population loses much of its large community significance because today people travel much more and use other contemporary means of communication. As the village rises above agriculture, the town also "rises above" management since many of the city people occupying managerial posts can live in well organized nearby villages. Thus, the village way of life tends to become equal to the way of life in the town. (NQ)

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Seminar II: The Future of Rural Communities in Industrialized Societies

RC009593

Mincho Draganov, Bulgaria (Sofia, Institute of Sociology, Blvd. „Vitosha" 39)

THE CHARACTER OF THE MODERN "VILLAGE" SETTLEMENT

Seminar 11

After a period of increased social, artistic and scientific interest in the problems of the village, a period covering the processes of the clash between the traditional rural structures and the dynamic phenomena of the rapidly industrializing society, a complete lack of interest in the problems of rural life followed. The devastating migrational waves from the village to the town, the disregard of rural life by journalism which shapes mass public opinion, etc., formed an attitude towards the village and the peasant as phenomena without any social perspective, as a dying out world; however, all these belong to the past. The shortcomings of modern urbanization provoke new interest in the village.

Meanwhile the new social and settlement conditions make it necessary and provide the basis for a reconsideration of the concepts of village and town, of urban and rural way of life, of urbanization.

The legitimation of a given settlement as a town or as a village is done with a normative act of the administrative-managerial bodies mainly according to the number of the inhabitants. The number of the inhabitants in itself, as it has been considered in the sociological literature long since, cannot be a criterion for the categorization of a given settlement as a village or as a town - it is an essential part of the basis upon which the social differences between different settlements are revealed.

Already during the first decade of our century in sociological literature a concept has been confirmed that the village can theoretically be differentiated from the town not on the basis of one characteristic, but on the basis of a complex of characteristics. The characteristics that are included in this complex are the following:

- the rural population is engaged mainly in agricultural labour;

- in terms of culture, living conditions and organization of public services, the rural population and the village are far behind compared to the town;

- the village does not exercise the functions of an administrative, cultural, financial and production center of other settlements;

- the village is small according to the number of the inhabitants (up to 2-3-5-10 thousand people);

- the density of living is qualitatively lower compared to the town.

The theoretical differentiation of the village from the town is made on the basis of this complex of characteristics and not on the basis of only one of them as the parameters of every one of the characteristics indicated can be equal to these parameters of the same characteristic concerning the town.

It is known that the inhabitants of some little towns have also been engaged mostly in agriculture. Therefore, industrial labour in itself cannot be a town-formation characteristic.

Compared to the town the backwardness of the village in culture, living conditions and urban development cannot be also the only basis for differentiating the village from the town. First, some towns from less developed countries may be more backward compared to some villages from more developed countries. Second, some towns of 50-100 years ago are "more backward" than some villages today. Third, some contemporary little towns in this respect stand much closer to some bigger villages than to the huge multimillion cities. However, the analysis of this characteristic gives us the possibility to assume that there are no constant criteria for a village and a town - the village and

the town are correlative categories within the framework of one historical period and within the framework of a group of nations at one and the same historical level.

The village can also exercise the functions of an administrative center and this is very often done in the administrative division of the territory of rural communities consisting of 3-5 villages.

As far as the number of inhabitants is concerned, as well as the density of population of the settlement area, these are rather conditions and consequences, than differentiating characteristics of the village and the town.

That is why I agree with the representatives of the Bulgarian sociological school, that the differences according to these characteristics are mutually connected into a complex and make the difference between town and village completely sociological.

There are, of course, some other characteristics that differentiate the village from the town. But these are either secondary characteristics or "characteristics" which in fact are not real. For example, it is stated that the village is only a consumer of spiritual values, but not a creator of such, i.e. that culture is an urban phenomenon. But at this statement the powerful stream of folklore is forgotten; in the same way, a given poet, no matter whether he lives in an out of town summer house or in a multistory building is a poet of a given nation or of the people, a poet who expresses certain social and class views.

However, we shall take the liberty of adding the following three characteristics to the above drawn complex of characteristics:

- the relative isolation of the classic village from the pulse of the whole social life of the nation, of the large human society. The inner-village problems dominate over the national which is determined by the relative economic exclusion and the

underdeveloped means of communication. The regulation of the social behaviour is in a considerable degree a selfregulation through routine, habitual and in most cases more or less ritualized values.

- division of labour according to the type of activity and details of a given activity in the town which makes impossible the satisfaction of the basic necessities inside the unit family, clan etc., demands certain desity of settlement and a relatively large number of people in the given community.

- specific way of life in the village determined by its closeness to the natural environment, by the low degree of division in the performance of different activities - labour, everyday life, aesthetic etc.,and especially by the small quantity of people in the settlement, who know each other personally and because of that have specific forms and way of regulation and control of bahaviour.

What has changed today in these characteristics and in their complex?

First of all the village begins to rise above agriculture. This is carried out along two lines: the larger part of the population is engaged in "industrial" labour - in factories, transport, public services - outside the village or in small enterprises in their own village; the agricultural labour itself becomes a subtype of the industrial labour. The everyday travelling to the place of work does not take qualitatively more time than in the big city.

In terms of culture, living conditions and organization of public services the village becomes equal or there is an apparent tendency to become equal to the town.

The quantity of population loses much of its large community significance because today people travel much more and use other contemporary means of communication.

There remain the administrative-managerial functions and the density of living. But as the village rises above agriculture,

in the same way the town "rises above" management in the sense that many of the people in the cities occupying managerial posts can live in well organized near-by villages.

In return for that the significance of another factor and characteristic increases very much - the character of the living environment and the closeness to nature.

The relative isolation of the classic village from the pulse of national life is decisively overcomed through the development of mass communications - transport, television, telephone, etc., and through raising the education and the general cultural level of the rural population.

The importance of one social and psychological fact also increases. This fact lies in the necessity of a minimum of population to ensure a peculiar publicity, a possibility for "their own" events in community life. This minimum which we can call "lower limit of the mass of the population" and which is being realized in the given village or in the naturally formed complex of near-by villages, is higher than with the classic village.

The village way of life tends to become equal to the way of life in the town.

On the basis of these short theses we can draw the following conclusions:

- the deep social differences between the village and the town tend to lose strength, the total opposing and contrast disappear rapidly.

- the concept of urbanization acquires also a new broader meaning: "the citification" of the village, of the peasant and of the rural way of life without migration to the town.

- the distinguishing between peasants and citizens lessens in role and importance both in the consciousness of the peasant and the citizen, and as a fact.

- the exploitation of the peasants by the town as a whole

which under capitalism was carried out together with the exploitation by the capitalists in towns and villages, disappears.

- the social functions of the village change: from a settlement in which the character of labour dominates it is transformed into a settlement in which the way of life function in the broad meaning of this term dominates. The village tends to become above all a specific residence place with a specific rhythm and forms of life ; of course within itself it develops the sphere of public services, agricultural labour for a small part of its population and house labour which includes also the work in a private agricultural plot, in a flower garden, etc.

- in the sphere of the inner-settlement functions the village is not opposed to the town as a whole but a gradual change is evident in the character of the inner community life between the two poles: the multimillion town and the small village, there is a series of intermediate degrees from one pole to the other.

About 20-30 years ago all we had very well known what is a peasant, what is a rural way of life, what is a village, what is a place of living. Now we don't so well know what is a village and what is a peasant, but we some better know what will be in the future with this, which we call a peasant, a village.